THE PLAYS AND ACTORS IN THE CHRISTMAS MONTH

By LAWRENCE REAMER.

THE art of Sarah Bernhardt as it was divulged last Monday in "The Death of Cleopatra" was well worth the study of all young actresses. It revealed what used to be the finest flashes of her genius. Just as she was always more admirable in the tragedy of Racine or Cornellie than in the plays that Sardou or his successors wrote for her, so was she superior in the touching episode of the suicide of the Egyptian queen to the loathsome "The Holocaust," which followed. It was true of the actress even in the days of her prime that she was finer in the worthy plays of her repertoire than in the occasional pieces written for the display of her most eccentric talents. One who has admired her incomparable performance of *Phedre* will never afterward have the same patience for *Floria Tosca*, brilliant as that famous impersonation was from its merely theatric glitter.

So in her present programmes at the Empire Theatre she is most reminiscent of her best days in episodes that are of some inherent merit. She sang exquisitely the phrases of Henri Cain. Her indication of the love and pride of the sovereign who would not allow herself to be dragged to Rome at the wheels of *Octavia's* chariot and her burning affection for *Marc Antony* were indicated with superb dignity and histrionism of the highest and purest order. Nothing that Mme. Bernhardt did on Monday was equal to this opening scene.

There are, of course, personal beauties in her acting which no others will ever equal merely because they cannot be Sarah Bernhardt. Her incomparable grace in the use of her arms, the exquisite chant which she uses in her minutes of tenderness and the mood of apparent ecstasy in which she plays some entire scenes—these are some of the purely personal traits which contributed to her fame and are, in the opinion of students of her art, worth many times more than all her climaxes of fury, her snarling and barking and the rest of the bag of tricks which were thrown into the high lights by the Sardou theatre. Luckily for the generation that is seeing her now for the first time, the loveliest qualities of her art are those which are now in their best estate. Her physical powers are now, moreover, quite incapable of supporting any of the emotional tantrums of other days.

There have been no imitators of the great French actress, Jane Hading, who was for a while regarded as a rival in Paris, never modelled her style on Bernhardt's. She was wholly different in method. The personal note in Sarah Bernhardt was so strong that the futility of imitation was always obvious. Of course, there were actresses to adopt her most patent mannerisms and to attempt her most hysterical emotional fits. But they never progressed beyond the externals of her style. What has made her great for so many years keeps her incomparable to-day. She is a tragedienne of the most exalted and classical gifts and not the mere melodramatic actress that such sketches as that rowdy little thriller "The Holocaust" would persuade one who had never seen her in anything else. It was as an actress of tragedy that she made her first success. That artistic sanctification has clung to her throughout all the stages of a career which has not always been guided by deference to the highest standards of art. But the collaboration between the actress and Victorien Sardou was probably the most successful commercially ever known in the theatre.

No obsession of Mme. Bernhardt's has ever puzzled her admirers so much as her conviction that she is able to play masculine roles. In the first place the assumption of male characters by women is one of the early crudities of the theatre which the progress of the art has left behind. There may be, for instance, such roles as *Oliver Twist* or equally boyish creations suited to portrayal by women. But they are few. Indeed most of them would be better played by certain actors. As *Oliver* even there would be much more illusion about Gareth Hughes than Marie Doro. But the playing of men's characters by women dates from an uncultivated period that delighted in the assumption of such characters as *Othello*, *Falstaff* and *Hamlet* by women. Of course, nothing of the kind would be tolerated on the stage to-day.

But Mme. Bernhardt has ever thought that she could act men's roles in a way to deceive the public. But she never has. Her *Hamlet* was Mme. Bernhardt in travesty, nothing else. Her *Eaglet* was the same. So is the French soldier in the patriotic episode "From the Stage to the Field of Honor." There is no suggestion of anything but womanly gentleness and pathos about the figure stretched out against the stump of the tree. Why such a clear minded artist as Mme. Bernhardt should for a minute suppose that there is anything to lead the audience to believe that a man is speaking, it is not possible to imagine. But it was ever thus with her assumption of masculine roles; although *Shylock* is nevertheless said to impend.

Is it through the women that operetta is to be relieved of some of its most trying conventions? Earlier in the season Dorothy Donnelly gave sparkle and novelty to the text of "Flora Bella," while Rida J. Young has accomplished as much for "Her Soldier Boy" at the Astor Theatre. Then Clara Kummer has often been called in. There were signs earlier in the season that the moss covered old jokes of the routine librettists were about to be expelled from the texts of operettas. Guy Bolton, who came into the field with his bright interpolations in "Very Good Eddie," united with P. G. Wodehouse in fashioning a text for "Miss Springtime" which was refreshingly free from the prevailing models in libretto jokes. It must be admitted that the two adapters of the piece at the New Amsterday Theatre did defer to convention by making use of a pair of very old ones. But as a rule there was a refreshing freedom from this kind of banality.

Now Miss Donnelly and Mrs. Young have spruced up a pair of translated texts until they have taken on the appearance of genuine brightness. Moreover their humor is of a more expansive character than that which the old timers used to supply. "The line of talk" as it might be called in the profession is of a distinctly different kind. It ought to be worth more money than the old fashioned kind. It entertains those who would resent or fail altogether to understand the former verbal fun of the librettists. So it is easy to extend the glad hand to the newer school of librettists. We feel a debt of gratitude to them for making the task of hearing comic opera a little less difficult than it used to be.

Michio Itow, the Japanese actor, who came to New York from London and helped the Washington Square Players mount "Bushibo," gave a matinee of dancing at the Comedy Theatre last week. It was unfortunate for the artistic unities that it was not possible to use Japanese music. But the accompaniments were the music of the modern composers, Rubinstein, Delibes and the rest of the Occidentals who provided the melodies and rhythms to which Itow gave his programme.

He has his muscles under complete control, which was shown in the "Caprice" dance to the music of the fizzicati from "Sylvia." Here the dancer, who uses his arms quite as much as his legs and has them under complete control, so delighted the spectators that he was compelled to repeat a part of the quickly and accurately performed manoeuvres, which were done while the dancer was seated on a platform. Technically this achievement was more in line with the ideas of the dance that prevail here. It was most original and diverting.

But certainly most characteristic were the other dances, largely interpretative and imaginative enough in their design. The fisher dance, in which the trailing silken trousers of the dancer threatened to trip him up, and would have proved the undoing of any less skilful artist, the death of the fox that could not stop dancing and finally died of the constant effort, the search of the witch for the sleeping infant—these were uncommonly interesting and unusual. They were largely pictorial, but contrived with more than ordinary definiteness to convey the impression intended by the dancer. The prowling of the hangia or female devil showed all the national peculiarities of pose and gesture to be observed in Japanese graphic art, while the death dance of the fox, in which the dancer assumed a mask, had the same strongly national features.

It would, of course, be much more satisfactory to see these dances to the accompaniment of Japanese music, but as they are at present Itow can give with them a most absorbingly interesting impression of Japanese stage art. Tulle Lindenhall was his graceful assistant.

THE THEATRES THIS WEEK.

Some Interesting Revivals Among the Dramatic Offerings.

Sarah Bernhardt will continue her engagement at the Empire Theatre this week, appearing in some familiar roles and others that are altogether new. The programme for Monday and Tuesday evening and Wednesday matinee will be "Hecuba," "English as It Is Spoken," "From the Stage to the Field of Honor" and "The Sham Model." On Wednesday evening, Thursday afternoon and Thursday evening the bill announced is "From the Stage to the Field of Honor," "The Husband's Luck," "The Merchant of Venice" and "Camille." For Friday evening, Saturday afternoon and Saturday evening "Hecuba," "English as It Is Spoken," "From the Stage to the Field of Honor" and "The Sham Model" are announced.

Stuart Walker's Portmanteau players will present eight different plays, of which four are new to New York at the Princess Theatre.

For the opening bill of the week "The Birthday of the Infanta," an adaptation of Oscar Wilde's story of the same name, and "Voices," an interlude by Hortense Flexner, will have their first New York performances. "Gammer Gurton's Needle," an adaptation of the oldest original farce comedy in the English language, will have its first professional performance, so far as records show, in New York city. The fourth play on Monday afternoon will be "The Trimplet," a dream play by Stuart Walker.

On Tuesday afternoon there will be a bill including "The Golden Doom" and "The Gods of the Mountain." "Voices" will be repeated, and also Mr. Walker's interlude called "The Very Naked Boy."

On Thursday afternoon the plays to be given are Gordon Bottomley's tragedy "The Crier by Night," Lord Dunsany's "The Gods of the Mountain," Hortense Flexner's "Voices" and Stuart Walker's interlude "Nevertheless."

The Friday afternoon bill will include "The Birthday of the Infanta," "The Very Naked Boy," "Voices" and "The Gods of the Mountain."

On Saturday morning, beginning at 10:30, the bill will include "The Trimplet," "Nevertheless" and "Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil," all by Mr. Walker.

Performances will be given both afternoon and evening.

BUSY MISS CALLAWAY.

She Does More Than Act in "Seven Chances."

A firm believer in the old adage about keeping busy to be happy, Emily Callaway—the businesslike *Peggy Wood* in "Widow by Proxy," the title role in "Madame Sherry" and *Mary* in "45 Minutes From Broadway."

She recently answered to the call of author when two of her short plays, "The Return of Deborah" and "Nobody Special," were given by a well known dramatic school, and also took a short flier in the movies.

"I am very happy in my present role of *Peggy Wood* in 'Seven Chances,'" said Miss Callaway the other day, "and I hope that the good luck which has favored me during the past six years will continue."

Good luck, she calls it, but hard work is the proper term. She is ambitious to do big things and there is every reason to believe she will succeed, for she combines talent with industry and a pleasing personality—a combination that never encounters failure.

OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES.

Margot Kelly, Knowing Nothing About It, Talks of Pantomime.

Margot Kelly, who lends her unique personality to the role of *Phrynette* in "Pierrot the Prodigal" at the Little Theatre, was asked last week to analyze her impressions of the art of pantomime. Miss Kelly, being the youngest member of the cast at the Little Theatre and the least experienced as an exponent of silent drama, brings to the subject a naivete and frankness of expression that perhaps could not be obtained from her confreres in the production.

"Ah, if I could only mime my impressions instead of talking," said the auburn haired actress to the interviewer. "How much shorter it would be, how much more lucid! To explain in words—oh, cutting irony!—a form of stage art which demonstrates the superfluity of all speech. Let me try, however, to account for the pleasure that I derive personally from playing in 'L'Enfant Prodigue.' Of course you know I had never appeared in pantomime before. The French actress who was to have played *Phrynette* was taken ill at the last moment and I went on the first night with a few rehearsals. M. Fournier, the stage director, told me at a private rehearsal just what the character was supposed to be and just how I was to interpret it. Perhaps you do not know that a pantomime is written in actual dialogue, the same as a drama or a comedy. The original manuscript of 'L'Enfant Prodigue' was written by M. Carre in rhythmic verse. So the stage director would read the original speech to me from the French text, then he would translate it into colloquial English, and then he would tell me exactly how to interpret it. I make my first entrance with the laundry basket, carrying myself with the haughty air of a duchess. When I see *Pierrot* for the first time a smile steals over my face. I know at once that I have won his heart. I pout my lips into a round O. I cover them with my right hand. I kiss it with a loud smack and waft the kiss into the air. You at once understand that I am trifling with poor *Pierrot's* heart, but after his passionate lovemaking I 'come down to cases,' as you say in America. I ask him how much money he has and he turns out his pockets to show me that they are empty. Well, poor *Pierrot*, if you have no coin there is nothing doing. So I turn to leave him and just as I am making my exit an inspiration comes to me. To enslave him further I throw him the flower from my bosom and the lovesick youth is mad with delight. The whole thing, do you see, is as clear and transparent as if we actually talked it all instead of miming it.

"Miss Patterson of course has a much more difficult role than I, and she does not have the opportunity to relax and enjoy herself while on the stage as I do. *Pierrot* is such a complex type of humanity—an irresponsible little animal—the eternal child in man. Miss Patterson is kept constantly busy expressing his many moods and caprices. And she has some big dramatic moments where she has to give herself heart and soul to her work. I, on the other hand, have many little pauses where I can relax. It is great fun playing my scene with M. Gouget, the new *Baron*. He makes me laugh as heartily as the audience. His face goes through as many queer contortions in five minutes as the features of a convict who objects to having his photograph taken. He has his own peculiar wink, his own peculiar shrug. But of course I have learned more from watching M. Clerget, the marvellous *Papa Pierrot*, than any of the others in the cast. I never let a performance go by without standing in the first entrance and absorbing everything that he does. As I do not have any of my scenes with M. Clerget, I take advantage of this opportunity to study his art. To me he is a consummate master. He acts with the palms of his hands, the tips of his fingers, his toes, the nape of his neck, the small of his back. His silence is more expressive than most people's speech. Some critics have held voice to be more necessary to an actor than histrionic power. I know that much of the charm of many of your great actresses depends upon their voice, and how much of the charm of Sarah Bernhardt depends upon her golden intonations. But I think there is really nothing more difficult and fascinating than the venerable art of pantomime—the oldest of all stage arts. Therefore I am constantly striving to do better and I have a perverse desire for an unattainable perfection."

PAVLOWA'S MASTERS.

Theodore Stier Tells of the Four Ballet Masters With Her.

Since Anna Pavlowa first came to America she has employed but four ballet masters to assist her in the staging of her ballets. These were Peter Zailich, Alexander Schirajeff, Michael Fokine and Ivan Clustine, the latter holding that position at the present time at the Hippodrome. During the period covering the activity of these expert dancing instructors Theodore Stier was Pavlowa's musical director, and as he collaborated with the ballet masters it is interesting to note his observations regarding each. Mr. Stier says:

"Zailich was the youngest and had risen to his position from the ranks, so to speak, as he was a member of the company previous to his promotion. He was extremely keen and enthusiastic, rather progressive in his ideas, and during the one year he held the position—so quickly and cruelly ended by his imprisonment in a German camp—did some exceedingly clever work. The well known 'Valse Printemps' and Mlle. Piaskovetzka's 'Pastorale' are characteristic examples of the delicate mosaic work in terpsichorean art peculiar to Zailich.

"Schirajeff as a ballet master was frankly antimodernist, and more inclined to hand down the traditions he had received during his many years' experience in a similar capacity in the opera houses at St. Petersburg and Moscow, and which were originated by the father of the Russian ballet, Petipa. Certain contortions of the upper part of the body, for instance, and effeminate movements of the arms and hands, rather favored by the latest school of the Russians, he openly abhorred. One of his sayings was: 'Dancing is dancing, and it is the feet that have to do it.' And anybody who remembers his wonderful 'Hornpipe' dance will admit that he certainly lived up to that principle. In addition to a keen sense of humor, which assisted him greatly in his productions of 'Le Fille Mal Gardee' and 'Magic Flute' he was an extremely kind hearted, pleasant mannered and well educated gentleman, and enjoyed the affection of the entire company to a higher degree perhaps than any of his predecessors.

"The most interesting method of rehearsing was, I think, enjoyed by Fokine. Unlike the others he never prepared his compositions beforehand, but used to think them out during the rehearsals as we went along. He would have a phrase played to him, perhaps once or twice, close his eyes, rest his head in his hands and think. Think so hard and intensely that we, sitting around in absolute silence and waiting sometimes as long as half an hour, could almost see his brain work. But the result was always well worth waiting for, as he used to obtain ideas of unusual beauty and originality in this manner. Many of his compositions in Mme. Pavlowa's exquisite interpretation have conquered the world. Among them I only need mention the 'Swan,' 'Valse Caprice,' &c. He possessed an intense knowledge of ancient and modern literature and used to spend every free minute in museums studying the masterpieces of painting and sculpture. What aided him particularly in his work was his excellent musicianship. To my astonishment he could read an orchestral score with utmost facility, and—in serious music—would never permit himself or anybody else the slightest violation of the tempo or the interpretation of a musical phrase to merely make it fit a certain step. In other words, he always treated the intentions of the composer in every way with reverence, which I confess made my collaboration with him a particular pleasure.

"Our ballet master to-day, Ivan Clustine, whose name is perhaps more familiar to American audiences than any of his predecessors, is now occupying this position for more than three years and the great number of successful ballets and divertissements—such as 'Puppenfee,' 'Chopiniana Walpurgisnight,' 'Snowflakes,' the Greek Dances of Brahms, and above all the generally beloved Gavotte Pavlowa, produced under his regime, bear witness to the high esteem in which he is held by both the public and his fellow artists. In his methods I should characterize him as a strict and unbending disciplinarian, yet not quite able to hide an extremely kindly nature under the surface of apparent severity."

POWERS AS A POET.

James T. Powers, who claimed that he wrote that stirring lyric "I Can Dance with Everybody But My Wife," has recently set out to prove that he is a poet, whatever may have been the decision of the court on that famous effort. This is Mr. Powers's latest inspiration. He calls it

A PASS FOR TWO.

Well, I never, this can't be Powers!
I've been thinking of you for the last two hours.
How are you, Jim—how is your health?
I suppose you must be rolling in wealth.
Do you remember the time you sprained your knee?
I was going to write you my sympathy.
I like you, Jim, and often think of you;
Would it be asking too much for a pass for two?

Well, I never, this can't be Moore,
I was just going to call around to your store.
How is Denver—and how are you?
You here in the West, you must feel blue.
When your poor dog died I felt so sore!
Still keeping the gents' furnishing store?
I like you, Billy, but how time flies.
Would it be asking too much for a couple of tickets?

L'ENVOI.

Well, we always meet men of this class;
We don't get the ties, but they get the pass.

MOTION PICTURES.

STRAND—Marie Doro in "Oliver Twist," by Charles Dickens, is the principal film of the week. "Our American Boys in the European War," showing American Ambulance Corps in service on Somme (auspices Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt); Ditmar's "Living Book of Nature," Topical Review, Nadine Leget, soprano, and Enrico Arenzen, tenor; concert orchestra, direction of Carl Edouarde.

RIALTO—"The Witching Hour," by Augustus Thomas, with Aubrey Smith and Marie Shotwell is the leading film. Jenny Dufau, colatura soprano, and Vincente Ballester, Spanish barytone; concert orchestra, direction of Hugo Reisenfeld; "Literary Digest of the Screen," Monday, Charlie Chaplin in "The Rink."

LOEW'S NEW YORK—Today, Petrova in "The Black Butterfly"; Monday, Charlie Chaplin in "The Rink," Mary Nash in "Arms and the Woman"; Tuesday, Dorothy Dalton in "A Gamble in Souls"; Wednesday, Rita Jolivet in "The Masque of Life"; Thursday, Dorothy Phillips in "The Prince of Silence"; Friday, Clara Kimball Young in "The Rise of Susan"; Saturday, June Caprice in "The Mischief Maker."

ACADEMY OF MUSIC—Gladys Coburn, William Fox's newest star, will appear in "The Battle of Life."

BROADWAY—"The People vs. John Doe" propaganda film, auspices of the Humanitarian Cult.

Current Productions.

Astor, "Her Soldier Boy"; Belasco, "Seven Chances"; Booth, "Getting Married"; Bramhall, "Keeping Up Appearances"; Casino, "Follow Me"; Century, "The Century Girl"; Cohan, "Come Out of the Kitchen"; Cohan & Harris, "Captain Kidd, Jr."; Comedy, the Washington Square Players; Cort, "Upstairs and Down"; Cort, "The Yellow Jacket"; Criterion, "Major Pendennis"; Eltinge, "Cheating Cheaters"; Empire, Mme. Sarah Bernhardt; Forty-eighth Street, "The Thirteenth Chair"; Forty-fourth Street, "Flora Bella"; Fulton, "The Master"; Gaiety, "Turn to the Right"; Garrick, "L'Aventuriere"; Globe, "The Harp of Life"; Harris, "Our Little Wife"; Hippodrome, "The Big Show"; Hudson, "Pollyanna"; Knickerbocker, "The Music Master"; Little, "Pierrot the Prodigal"; Longacre, "Nothing but the Truth"; Lyceum, "Mile-a-Minute Kendall"; Manhattan Opera House, "Ben-Hur"; Maxine Elliott's, "Fixing Sister"; New Amsterdam, "Miss Springtime"; Playhouse, "The Man Who Came Back"; Princess, Portmanteau; Punch and Judy, "Treasure Island"; Republic, "Good Gracious Annabelle"; Shubert, "So Long Letty"; Thirty-ninth Street, "Old Lady 31"; Winter Garden, "Show of Wonders."

Motion pictures—Broadway, "The People vs. John Doe"; Liberty, "Intolerance"; Lyric, "A Daughter of the Gods."

Old Plays on New Stages.

Director Bonheur of the Theatre Francais will present to-morrow night at the Garrick Theatre Emile Augier's "L'Aventuriere," which used to be admired here when Jane Hading acted the role of the beautiful heroine. The famous play will be presented by the best powers of the company at the Garrick Theatre. Claude Benedict will act the leading role opposite to Mlle. Darthy.

Frances Carson is the heroine of the approaching production of "Daddy Long-Legs" at the Standard Theatre. Just like the heroines of "Peg o' My Heart," all the talented young ladies that succeed Miss Chatterton are certain to be successful. There is an excellent company associated with Miss Carson.

Mrs. Fiske, in her irresistibly comic performance of the heroine of "Erstwhile Susan," will come to the Bronx Opera House on Monday. This is a performance which no admirer of the actress should miss.

Vaudeville and Burlesque.

PALACE—Edna Goodrich in "The Mannequin," a comedy of the modiste's showroom, by Edgar Allan Woolf, is the headliner. William Rock and Frances White, Julius Tannen; "Rubeville," with Felix Rose and Jere Delaney; Haruko Onuki, Japanese prima donna; "Creation" (second week); "Gertie," motion picture cartoon by Winsor McCay; Willa Holt Wakefield and Ambark's Arabs.

COLUMBIA — "Step Lively Girls," with Rich McAllister, Maudie Heath, Harry T. Shannon, Dick Knowles, Tillie Cox, Julia Edwards, Mae White and others, assembled by Arthur K. Pearson.

LOEW'S AMERICAN—Maud Muller will be the headliner. Lee Rose and Gloria Foy, Sophie and Harvey Everett in "Ankles"; Swain's Rats and Cats, Bronte and Aldwell; "A Holland Romance," operetta; Ada Gordon, Jessie Hayward, Barbour Troupe, Gerard and West, Feature films.